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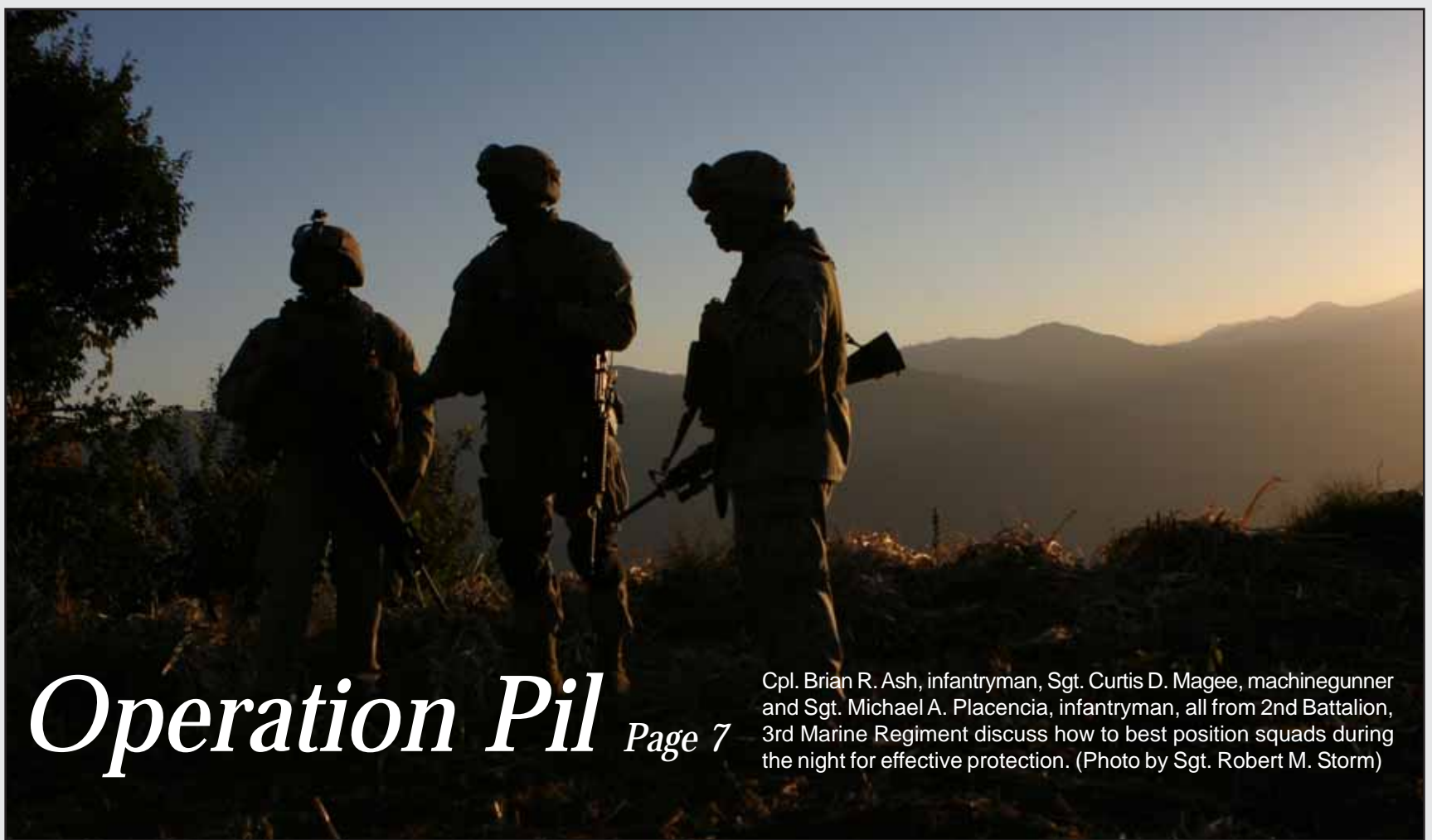
# THE PATRIOT



Vol 1, Issue 13

A CJTF-76 Publication

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## Operation Pil Page 7

Cpl. Brian R. Ash, infantryman, Sgt. Curtis D. Magee, machinegunner and Sgt. Michael A. Placencia, infantryman, all from 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment discuss how to best position squads during the night for effective protection. (Photo by Sgt. Robert M. Storm)

# Young leader a beacon of hope

Story by Capt. Allan Dollison  
492<sup>nd</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion

LASHKAR GAH - No one would argue that there are many differences between an average 18-year-old recent female high-school graduate from Afghanistan compared to one from the United States.

One thing is certain; 18 year olds from both countries don't typically seek elective office to a governing body overseeing 1.4 million people. That is unless you're Salima Sharifi from Lashkar Gah, Helmand Province.

There are many great and uplifting stories about Afghanistan's recent parliamentary and provincial council elections. The story of Salima, and how she was elected to the Helmand Provincial Council probably says more about how far Afghanistan has come in these last four years than any single other subject.

Salima is the daughter of Mohammad Zahir, who is a school teacher in Lashkar Gah. Salima was born in Helmand province's Gereshk, Nahrri Sarraj District as was her father. Her family, like

millions of other Afghans, fled the country during the decades of war with Russia and then the Taliban. During most of that period, they resided in Iran. They lived as refugees. They returned to Afghanistan in 2002, after the fall of Taliban

Her access to education in Iran was as one can imagine spotty at best. Her father, though, ensured that her and her siblings were educated.

A lot of her education came directly from her father. He dreamed of one day returning to his native country, and he was concerned that his children would fall behind in their academics due to their refugee status. Once they returned to Afghanistan, Salima was enrolled in the Lashkar Gah Girl's High School where she graduated in June.

Salima knew that the elections were a momentous event in Afghanistan's post-Taliban democratic development.

"My father is a major influence on me," she said. "I decided to run, but did so knowing that I had the comfort of my father's acceptance and backing."

See LEADER page 2



Eighteen-year-old Salima Sharifi was elected to the Helmand Provincial Council. (Photo courtesy of Capt. Allan Dollison, 492<sup>nd</sup> Civil Affairs Battalion)



## Across Afghanistan / CJTF - 76

# Trailblazing through polls

## Young Afghan woman makes mark in historic elections

### LEADER from page 1

Her choice of the Provincial Council instead of the Wolesi Jirga, shows a political shrewdness, years beyond her age. She calculated that she would stand a better chance, seeking the lesser of the two offices, which also had more seats available.

Her calculations paid off and she snuck in by garnering enough votes to snag the fourth and last seat that was designated for female candidates. She received over 2,000 votes, a tally that was many more than the majority of male candidates seeking the same office. This remarkable support from everyday Afghans shows her election was not a fluke, but rather an endorsement of her ideas.

Despite her growing up in Afghanistan and Iran, Salima has ideas to solve Afghanistan's problems that are quite liberal and Western in their approach.

She believes that Afghanistan is "becoming too dependent on the Coalition forces for money and resources."

She believes that money should come from these "millionaires and drug dealers" who seem to be so prevalent in Southern Afghanistan's Helmand Province.

Salima also commented that many educated, successful and professional Afghans fled the country during the decades of wars. She believes that this has contributed to the current condition of the country. She hopes to urge them to come back and take leadership positions.

"People left (and are still leaving), because they are afraid," she said.

She figures that if this phenomenal talent pool that is currently residing in other countries can be encouraged to return, then they will form the foundation for the true rebuilding of Afghanistan.

Her primary focus will be on young people. She said that Afghanistan is primarily a young country.

"There are far more younger people than older people," she said.

Salima is an example of what a young educated person can do with a dream. She feels that if she empowers thousands of similar young people, then they will form the foundation from which to rebuild Afghanistan.

Salima believes that "education, not money, is the solution." She feels strongly that education is the key to becoming truly independent.

"Expanding power and electricity, engineering roads, setting up a workable justice system, creating businesses and enterprises—all of these things can be done by educated people," she said. "If we do it ourselves, then we can solve our own problems and not have to solely depend on the Coalition forces."

Salima is on a mission. She doesn't intend to stop with this foray into politics. She has plans to study at a university and dreams of becoming a lawyer. Given what

she has accomplished so far in her young life coupled with the challenges and adversities that she has had to overcome, no one doubts that Salima will achieve her goals.

Recently the Lashkar Gah Provisional Reconstruction Team has nominated Salima for a slot on an upcoming International Visitor Program, sponsored by the United States Department of State. If selected, Salima will fly to the United States and take part in briefings to learn about business, governance and justice programs that could potentially be implemented in Afghanistan. The program has limited

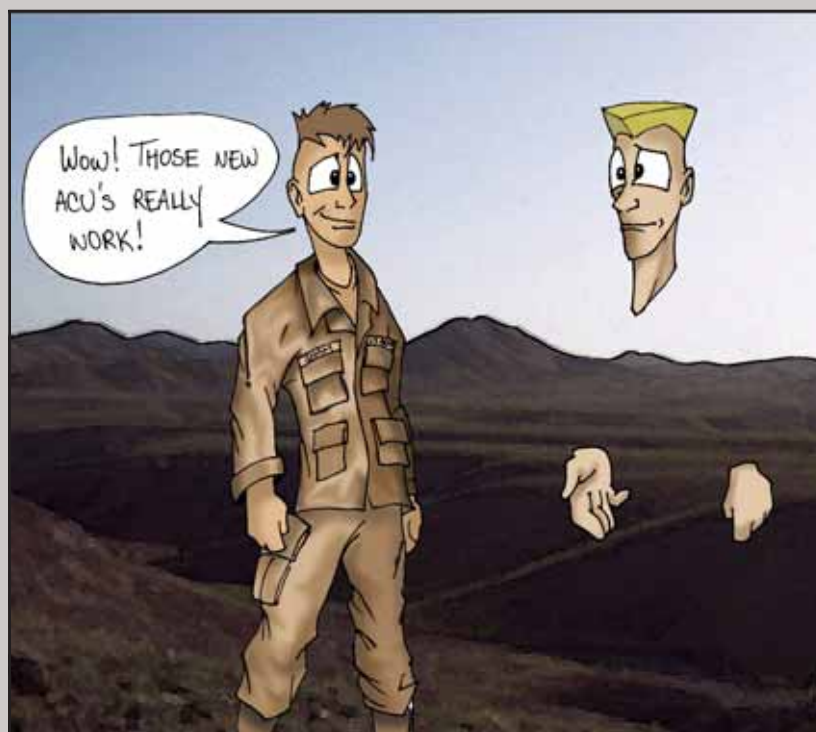
slots available, but Salima is hopeful that she can see the United States and learn more to help the citizens that elected her.

The program will also focus on educating Afghanistan's newly elected future leaders about the basics of the political and governance process.

The Coalition forces have provided the opportunity for individuals to exercise their democratic rights, as well as foster the types of ideas that Salima has. This is no small achievement and it shows that Afghanistan is well on its way in developing a democracy.

## Reality Check

By Staff Sgt. Bryan Dorman



## Photo from the field

Photo by Sgt. Michael Ortiz, 2/503rd (Airborne) Infantry medic



A Soldier with the 2nd Battalion 503rd (Airborne) Infantry hikes down a mountain as the sun sets during an operation in the Zabul Province.

### THE PATRIOT

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The editor reserves the right to edit all submissions for style, brevity and clarity.

Take pictures within your units. Look for unique shots that show your unit's mission and E-mail them to: **schultea@cjtf76.centcom.mil**

In the subject line, type "Photo Contest" and your name.

Submit by end of each month. The winner will be notified by e-mail. Three photos max per month.

Winning photos will run in **The Patriot**.

Photographer will also receive a Commanding General coin and a 2-Star note.

Include Name, Rank, Unit, Job Description and hometown of photographer. Also, provide in the caption - the date, location, unit mission and identify any troops.



# Across Afghanistan / CJTF - 76

## Just Step In

**Chaplain (Col.) Charles Bailey**  
CJTF-76 Command Chaplain,  
Bagram

The holidays of November and December represent what is best about America. We recently observed Veterans Day to commemorate democracy and honor those who helped sustain the freedoms we enjoy today. Thanksgiving Day reminds us of those blessings, qualities and sacrifices that make life

worthwhile and this nation dear to our hearts; hopefully for more than 24 hours.

During November and December, three great religious festivals renew the spiritual values of selfless sharing, courage, love, peace and joy. Ramadan has just concluded for Muslims in which a month of fasting was done to celebrate their faith. Advent begins the last weekend in November for Christians and culminates in the observance of Christ's First Advent on Dec. 25. Jews observe Chanukah or the Feast of Lights for eight days starting the eve of Dec. 26. Few, if any other nations, offer these opportunities to so many of its citizens, so spend a few minutes with me reflecting on the meaning of these special events.

Someone once observed, "If you want to find gratitude, look for it in the dictionary!" Gratitude does not surface naturally. We tend to focus on all the problems of life, forgetting our blessings. Being negative is easy when we let circumstances dictate our perspective. After spending a whole day hunting for bear without seeing so much as a track, a hunter headed slowly for home. Nearing his truck, a bear suddenly appeared and charged. The hunter quickly readied his rifle and aimed, but in the process he tripped over a small log and sprawled backwards. The rifle flew out of his hands landing several feet away. The bear was almost upon him, so the man cried out in desperation, "Lord, please let this be a religious bear." Hearing this prayer, the bear stopped, put his paws together, bowed his head and prayed, "Lord, thank you for this meal I am about to

eat."

Where does one start to help others or do something that will make a difference to the community and to lives? The choices are so broad and varied. I remember a story from the Civil War that illustrates what I am attempting to share.

During a Civil War battle a young officer became detached from his regiment and could not find his way back to it. As he searched for his comrades, he met General Sheridan and asked, "Where shall I step in? I've become de-

tached from my regiment."

Sheridan roared in reply, "Step in? Step in anywhere! There's fighting all along the line."

That's a pretty good answer. Nike has the right slogan for it as well, "Just Do It!" Opportunity is all around us to make a difference somewhere and with someone where we are now. There is no limit what you and I can do to help people individually and/or in a group.

During this season keep an eye out for your buddy and those with whom you work. What can you do by word or deed to bring a little more joy into their life? But Chaplain, where do I go to help? Just step in. There are needs all around you. At this range, you can't miss.

**"Just step in.  
There are needs  
all around you.  
At this range,  
you can't miss."  
- Chaplain Bailey**



## Snail mail helpful hints

Mail...everyone loves it, but it seems that mail can never come as often as you want nor as fast as you want. But be sure that the units are working hard to get you your mail where you are as quickly as possible.

To ensure fast mail delivery, make sure you are giving your correct address to family and friends so the mail goes to the proper location in theater. The forward operating bases receive the most missent mail from Bagram and Kandahar. Units need to maintain a current list of soldier locations and provide that information regularly to the mail handlers in the rear.

Units should direct their mail handlers to pick up mail daily to ensure that mail is not returned to the sender.

Most of the mail has been sorted and either forwarded onward or put into the APO mail distribution within 24 hours. Mail sent throughout the theater is moved using the ring route within one to eight days.

Post office boxes are emptied daily and processed for delivery within 24 hours.

Mail is delivered to the forward operating bases by the ring routes or by convoy. If mail is sent to the wrong location, it is forwarded again out of the FOB adding another three to five days to get the mail to the soldier.

Base commanders are recommended to develop mail handling procedures for their local postal operations to ensure soldiers are regularly picking up and receiving their mail.

These are some helpful hints and just a tid bit of information on the postal processes here in the theater. They are working to get your mail to you as fast as possible, help them out as well.



## Media Center dedicated to comrade



Cpl. John Chriswell, Combined Joint Task Force-76 media relations, and Sgt. 1st Class Rick Scavetta, CJTF-76 media chief, unveil a sign dedicating the CJTF-76 Media Center at Bagram Airfield to 1st Lt. Laura Walker during the dedication ceremony Nov. 4. Walker was deployed with the 864th Engineer Combat Battalion (Heavy) and was later appointed as the Task Force public affairs officer. She was killed Aug. 18 in Delak, Afghanistan. (Photo by Marine Lance Cpl. Guillermo Vargas, AFN)



## Across Afghanistan / CJTF - 76

# Road work ahead

Afghanistan's busiest runway undergoes repairs as mission continues

Story and photos by

**Capt. James H. Cunningham**  
455th Air Expeditionary Wing  
Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – Age, weather and more than 3,000 operations every week take their toll on the busiest runway in Afghanistan. Without a continual effort to repair the runway here, the mission would virtually come to a halt.

A nine-man spall repair team from the 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron spends at least two hours every day maintaining the runway. A spall is a shallow break in the concrete, usually along a joint.

"We've made more than 200 repairs in the last two months," said Tech. Sgt. Jason Benbrook, non-commissioned officer in charge of airfield maintenance who's deployed here from Anderson Air Base, Guam. "This is an on-going effort to support the mission until the new runway is completed."

"The 455th ECES airfield repair team mission is critical to our operations at Bagram. Without constant runway repair, Bagram flight operations would stop within a few days or risk significant damage to fixed-wing aircraft," said Lt. Col. Mark Danigole, 455th Expeditionary Operations Group deputy commander. "Without their tremendous effort, Bagram drops from 140,000 operations a year — three times Ramstein Air Base, Germany — and becomes little more than a huge



Staff Sgt. Tony Dyplowski, pavements and equipment craftsman, 455th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron, uses a concrete saw to repair the runway here. In the last two months, a nine-man spall repair team here has made more than 200 repairs to sustain more than 3,000 operations each week in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Sergeant Dyplowski, a native of Miami, Fla., is deployed here from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, Ariz.

parking lot."

The amount of work accomplished is even more impressive when taking into account all that repairs are made between arriving and departing flights on a fully active runway; it's an effort that requires total team coordination.

"Our deputy operations group commander, Lt. Col. Mark Danigole, has worked tirelessly to understand and minimize the effect unscheduled landings and takeoffs have on moving teams off the runway during the middle of repair operations," said Lt. Col. Stephen Becker, 455th ECES commander. "His actions signify the close working relationship my squadron has with the wing, other groups and airfield management to ensure repair operations are prioritized and executed in a highly efficient manner."

To make the repair, Airmen saw a square around the spall, jackhammer away the bad concrete, vacuum up the debris, then fill the hole with a quick-drying mortar mix. Within 30 minutes, the repair is dried and ready for aircraft to land on.

Bagram's runway supports critical combat and humanitarian missions. The repairs keep the spall's loose debris from damaging aircraft engines or tires.

"What we do has a direct impact on the mission," said Staff Sgt. Brady Dryden, NCOIC of spall repair crew. "Without us, the aircraft couldn't do their job. It makes us feel like we're part of what's going on here at Bagram."

## Course shapes PRT commanders

### Key staffers train leaders for success

Story by Senior Airman  
**Vanessa Walsh**  
CJTF-76 Public Affairs

BAGRAM AIRFIELD - The Provincial Reconstruction Team Pre-Command Course brought together six selected PRT commanders Oct. 31-Nov. 3 at Bagram Airfield.

The course familiarized future PRT commanders with the demands and responsibilities of their new position.

"Our goal is to orient these folks to the PRT," said Lt. Col. John Harney, Civil Military Operations director.

"Although they've already been selected as PRT commanders, they don't have the full understanding of what a PRT is. There aren't field manuals for them; they're new to military doctrine."

The course covered Afghanistan's culture, commanders' expectations, political roles, support services available, force protection, counter narcotics and more.

"A PRT commander is not only the person who interfaces with the government of Afghanistan, but he is also the commander of the PRT," Harney said. "He or she is

dual hated with civil and military operations to deal with — it's a broad and demanding duty."

A unique aspect of the course is the two-way exchange of information.

"It's an interactive setting with small group discussions, and participants and speakers are asking questions of each other," he said.

The most rewarding aspect of the course was to hear strategic and operationally important information from the sources, according to Lt. Col. Anthony Feagin, future PRT Metherrland commander in Laghman

Province.

"It's not often you get to sit down and talk to the deputy chief of U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan," Feagin said, also noting the privilege of hearing Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya, CJTF-76 commander. "[With all the speakers] we were able to discuss anything and get immediate feedback."

Although Feagin said he feels prepared to take command, he still is anxious about taking over for the current commander who has standing relationships with local officials.

"Soon, I'll be respon-

sible for sustaining and enhancing those relationships," Feagin.

Feagin summarized the week by saying, "you guys and gals are going out there — here's the key pieces of information you need to know to be successful."

"[Attendees] leave with exposure to all aspects in their role as a PRT commander," Harney said. "It's my goal to give them all the tools possible to enhance their jobs."

The course is the third one of its kind and more will be scheduled as needed.



## Regional Command East / Task Force Devil

# Buffalo Soldiers

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Curtis Matsushige  
TF Devil Public Affairs

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO** - Considered the most mine-ridden country in the world, Afghanistan offers unique challenges to Army Reserve Engineers whose job it is to clear roads of deadly explosives.

To accomplish their mission and clear the way to safeguard Soldiers, these engineers have a special vehicle to help them with their job. Built tough, their mine protective clearance vehicle is fondly known as the Buffalo.

It is the Soldiers of Company A, 391<sup>st</sup> Combat Engineer Battalion, a reserve unit from Ashville, N.C., who are responsible for running and maintaining the Buffalo. They are operationally controlled by the 18<sup>th</sup> Engineer Brigade Forward, Task Force Sword, during their one-year deployment.

"We call this one (vehicle) the 'water buffalo' though it can't swim," said Pfc. Erick Risher, a combat engineer and mechanic from Weaverville, N.C. "One Soldier

found that out the hard way after driving it almost window deep into water."

Luckily for the driver he was able to drive the Buffalo out of his self imposed water trap under its own power.

To give a feeling of the Buffalo's size, it takes an 8-foot ladder to get onboard this 26-ton beast made of armor and steel, and it rides on 5-foot diameter tires. The entry ladder is built onto the Buffalo, but its operators have learned how to mount the vehicle from both sides and the front.

One unique feature of this mammoth machine is three built-in cameras providing the operators views of the vehicle's surroundings while they remain safely inside.

"Being way up here, it's good to know if there's something in the back or in front of you," said Sgt. Tony Laws, engineer. "It would be a tough job to pry off a civilian car from under the front chase."

Another feature that grabs your attention is a large folded cryptic appendage, on the passenger-side of the vehicle.

"We call it the arm," said Buf-



The mine protective clearance vehicle or "Buffalo" under the manipulative skill of Sgt. Josh O'Conner scoops-up and simulated explosive device.

falo driver, Sgt. Josh O'Conner whose job it is to manipulate and control the arm.

The arm operator uses robotic controls to extend the 20-foot-long tentacle. It takes skill and agility to manipulate this powerful steel appendage. The Buffalo's armored hide protects Soldiers while they use the arm to probe for mines and bombs.

"It (the arm) interrogates a suspected explosive device," said

O'Conner. "Most of the explosives we find get detonated on the spot."

O'Conner demonstrated his ability to manipulate the arm by detecting, extracting and scooping-up a dummy IED.

A powerful Mack truck engine provides muscle to move the Buffalo around the roads of Afghanistan.

The Buffalo is just another piece of equipment that helps ensure the safety of Soldiers

## Wildcat's keep clawing away



One of the many causeways going in on the road from Orgune to Sharana. (Photo courtesy of TF Sword)

Story by Lt. Col. Steve Reed  
TF Sword Civil Affairs

**PAKTIKA PROVINCE** - Their motto is "Build and Destroy." And they have had to opportunity to do both on the Orgune to Sharana road project. What they are building is a two-lane improved gravel road

through 65 kilometers of some of the most difficult terrain in Afghanistan. Who are they? They are 391<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion from Greenville, South Carolina.

TF Wildcat first deployed troops to Orgun-E from Bagram Airfield in late June to begin work toward Sharana. The days start

early and end late. The security team heads out around 5 a.m. everyday with the route-clearance package to make sure no improvised explosive devices were emplaced overnight. So far, they have found 17. Recently, a 107 mm rocket IED struck a up-armored humvee at the end of the workday. Fortunately the warhead didn't explode and just ricocheted off the door.

The task force hasn't been as lucky on every incident. On Aug. 11, a Wildcat convoy was ambushed and Sgt. Eddie Hesleton was killed while driving his truck. Only a courageous counter attack into the kill zone saved his passenger, a female Soldier.

The first challenge was to relocate the road out of the river bed so spring snow melt wouldn't wash it away. To further alleviate flooding risks, they also altered the river channel. It wasn't exactly the Panama Canal, but a challenging task nevertheless. The river bed section also required 23 concrete low-water crossings and three causeways. Local contract labor installed most of these.

The second and most challenging section of the road is the moun-

tain section. The Wildcats had to blast away sheer stone walls to widen the road to allow two vehicles to pass. This was also the most dangerous from a force protection viewpoint as high ground on both sides of the work site offered ideal ambush locations for enemy forces. But so far, the security element led by Capt. Todd Burroughs has done its job and there hasn't been another incident.

The third section is open desert. The dust is often so thick the equipment has to stop because they can't see a foot in front of the vehicle. The "moondust" is very fine and finds its way into everything, including the lungs. At the end of the day, the crew served weapon gunners are light brown in color from head to toe. And if they're lucky, they'll have a hot shower when they return to base. Too often they're not lucky. Though they have built new roofs for buildings on the base and other quality-of-life projects. Installing new water heaters hasn't been one of them, yet.

The Wildcats are scheduled to finish the road on Dec. 1. Then

See WILDCATS page 9



## Regional Command East / Task Force Devil



Members of the 13<sup>th</sup> MP CO compete during the tug-o-war competition during the TF Guardian Military Police Pig Bowl. (Photo courtesy of CJTF-76 PMO)

# MPs battle it out in Pig Bowl

**Story by Capt. Luke Coffey**  
*CJTF-76 Provost Marshal Office*

BAGRAM AIRFIELD - The military police, military intelligence and force protection Soldiers of Task Force Guardian recently participated in one of the most looked-forward-to events of the year for any military policeperson, the Military Police Pig Bowl.

The Pig Bowl brings the members of the Military Police Corps together to celebrate the establishment of the Military Police Corps on Sept. 26, 1941, by holding various sporting events testing physical fitness, stamina and team work; all of which are ingredients for a successful MP.

As Col. Kat Miller, Commander of TF Guardian and Com-

bined Joint Task Force 76 Provost Marshal mentioned in her opening remarks; it is no secret the word "Pig" is used "as a disparaging term to describe a police officer."

If one digs deeper, though, into the definition, and takes the Chinese Zodiac as an example, "you will find that pigs are associated with honesty, honor and valor," she said.

Military and civilian police officers around the world use the acronym P.I.G. to stand for "Pride, Integrity, Guts."

However, it must be said that the aforementioned date only signifies the creation of the Military Police Corps as we know it today. In American military history, the Military Police Corps has played a major role since the Revolutionary War to the present day War on Terrorism.

The Army's first Provost Marshal was appointed and directed by George Washington himself. Throughout the years, the contribution to the Army and professional conduct of the Military Police Corps has made it the apotheosis of honor, integrity and discipline.

On the sunny and mildly cool day of Oct. 1, members of TF Guardian gathered at the Bagram Airfield Clamshell to celebrate 64 years of proud service by the Military Police Corps. Twelve teams representing all units from TF Guardian challenged one another, in single elimination tournament play, to five vs. five basketball, six vs. six volleyball, horseshoes and tug-o-war.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Military Police Company based at Bagram came ahead

as the winner of two out of four events; the tug-o-war and volleyball. The 202<sup>nd</sup> Military Police Company was the victor in the horseshoe competition. A-141 Infantry took the honors of winning the basketball tournament against TF 165 military intelligence; in what many believed to be a very close and well-played championship game.

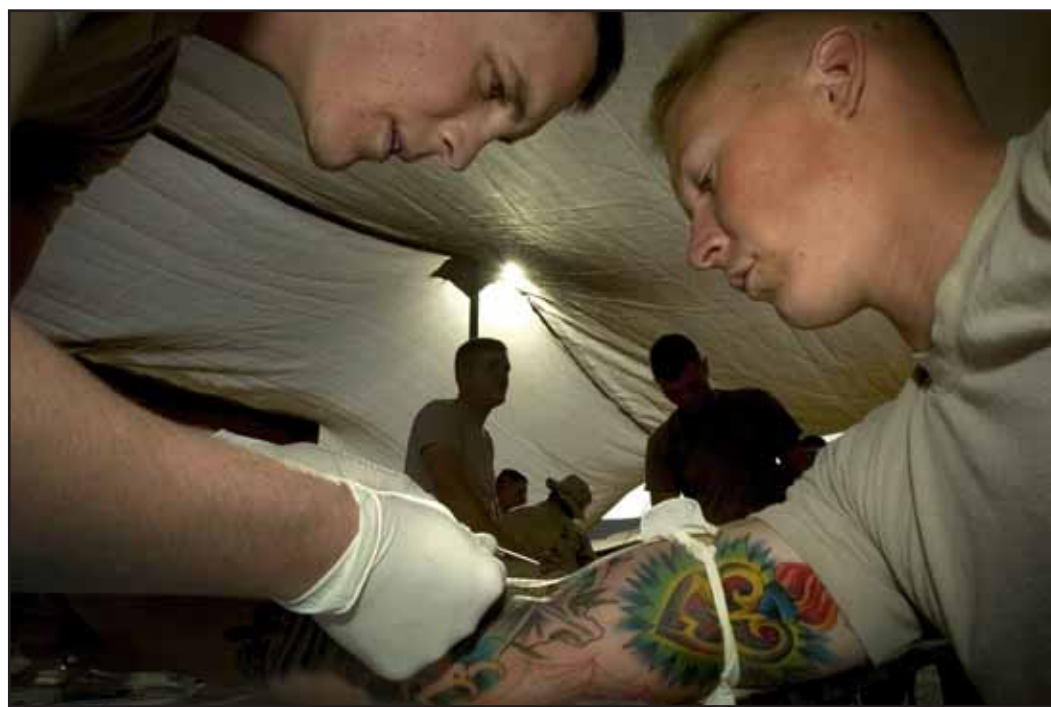
Perhaps the biggest winners of the day were not the victorious military police units but the Military Police Corps as a whole. Between events, Soldiers participated in various raffles that generated \$3,571 for Military Police family members and Soldiers wounded during Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom. Sportsmanship, esprit de corps and fun ensured that the first inaugural Pig Bowl at Bagram Airfield was a huge success.

## Medics give "Devil Responder" class

**Story and photos by Spc. Laura E. Griffin**  
*TF Devil Public Affairs*

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO - "Are you ready?" asked Spc. John Kennedy, a cannon crewmember with Battery C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 319<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, as he prepared to stick an 18-gauge needle into the arm of Pfc. Joel Westberry, also a C Battery cannon crewmember during the intravenous injection training portion of the "Devil Responder" medical course at Forward Operating Base Salerno, Afghanistan, Oct. 20.

This course is a combination of the combat lifesaver course and the paratrooper medical course. It's a five-day hands-on course



Pfc. Robert Meadows, a field artillery tactical data systems specialist with Battery C, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 319<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment, gets ready to stick Pfc. Joseph Hoskins, a cannon crew member in Battery C, with an intravenous catheter needle during "Devil Responder."

that starts with basic evaluation of a casualty and guides the students through dealing with head wounds, fractures, burns, giving an intra-

venous fluid injection and finally transporting a patient to the helicopter landing zone for medical evacuation.

"It's like CLS on ste-

roids," said Staff Sgt. David Barakat, the platoon sergeant for Ambulance Platoon, 307<sup>th</sup> Logistical Task Force. "We teach the Sol-

diers how to use all types of bandages and dressings, pretty much everything that's in the Individual Paratrooper Lifesaver Kit and more."

The IPLK is the Army's replacement for the old standard field dressing that every soldier used to wear. In it, a soldier carries an ace wrap, the new Israeli dressing, a nasal pharyngeal airway, a combat application tourniquet, a cravat, tape, surgical lube and a 14-gauge catheter.

"The Army realized that old field dressing was not enough to handle the wounds that soldiers are receiving on the modern battlefield, so they developed this bag that all of our soldiers are carrying," said Barakat. "This bag also

**See CLASS page 9**



## Regional Command East / *Task Force Devil*



(Left) Cpl. Christopher S. Starks, infantryman, from Orem, Utah, sets up for security during a patrol on Operation Pil. (Right) A Marine stands guard while Marines and Sailors conduct their latest mission. 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, conducted Operation Pil in the Watapor Valley in the Kunar Province Oct. 16-23 in order to improve security and assist in stabilizing the government in the troubled region.

# 2/3 Marines and Sailors prove no mountain too tall

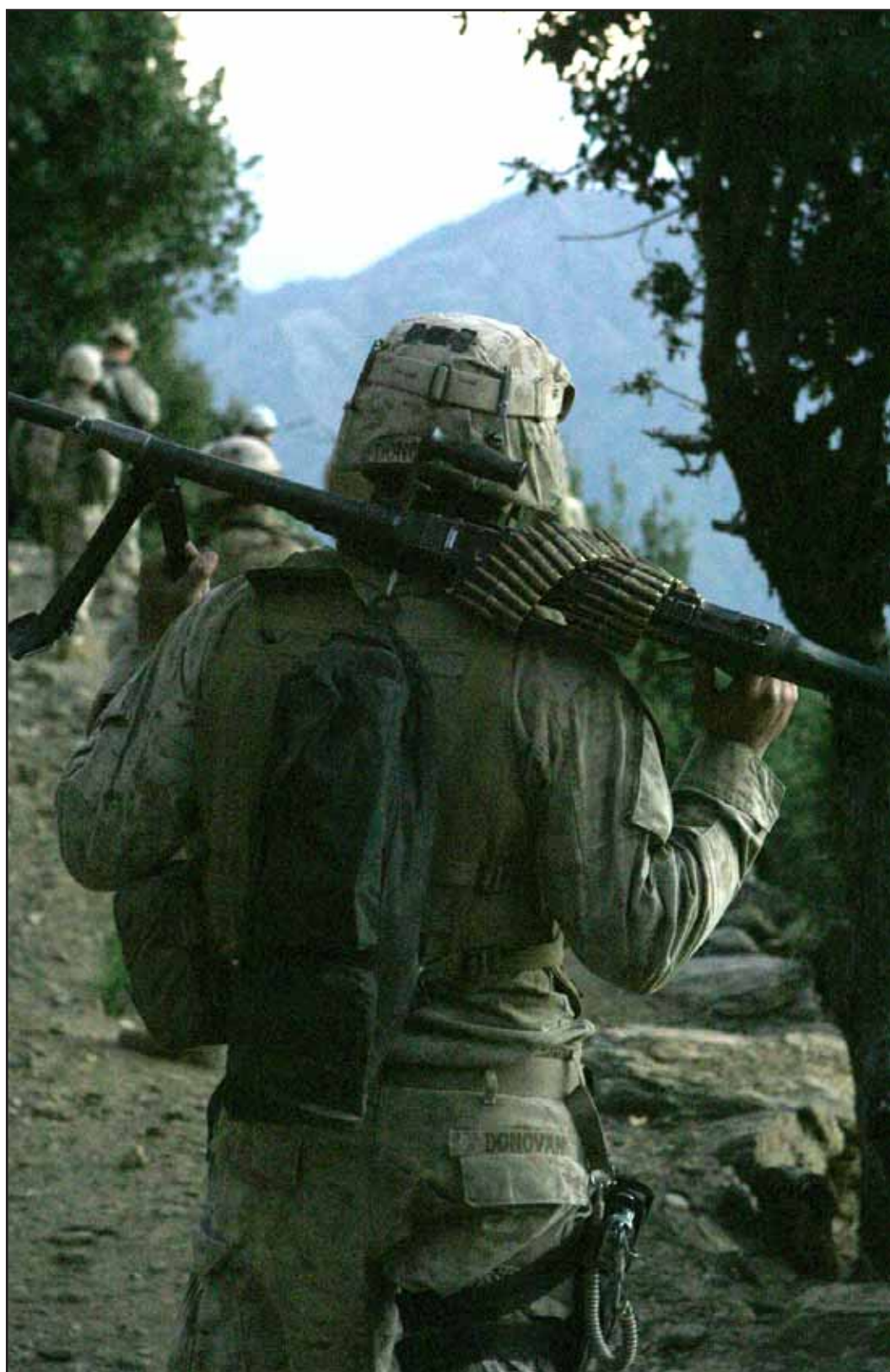
**Story and photos by  
Sgt. Robert M. Storm**  
*2/3 Marines Public  
Affairs*

JALALABAD - Marines and Sailors of 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Corps Division, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, conducted Operation Pil in the Watapor Valley of the Kunar Province, Afghanistan Oct. 16- 23 in order to improve security and assist in stabilizing the government in the troubled region.

The campaign in Afghanistan has come to be thought of by some as the “other” conflict since the invasion of Iraq began. However, while the country remains dangerous and uncertain, steps toward a peaceful and stable government have been considerable.

Operation Pil was the latest mission launched by the Marines and Sailors aimed at improving security within the problem areas of the Kunar province.

“We didn’t find much during this operation, but it was still good to show the villagers an Island Warrior presence,” said Sgt. Curtis D. Magee, machinegunner, from Collins, Miss. “For our part of the mission we had to hike up over 5,000 feet to a mountain top, but it was good for us to do that stuff. It’s what we need to



do as infantry, staying out in the field and accomplishing whatever mission we’re as-

signed.”

The Marines encountered little enemy contact

throughout the operation with the exception of Camp Blessing, the farthest Marine

Corps outpost in Afghanistan. Blessing received indirect mortar fire from enemy forces, but the Marines attacked using artillery and air strike, which destroyed the enemy’s position.

In support of the operation, Marines and Sailors of 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines deployed to accomplish various missions throughout Kunar province.

“As the main effort we were tasked with ascending a mountain in order to cordon and search the village of Tsangar. This village was an [enemy] safe haven for planning attacks against Coalition forces,” said 1st Lt. Chuck Siedlecki Jr., executive officer Golf Company, from Berlin N.J. “The Marines and Sailors did a stellar job accomplishing the mission.”

The presence of the Marines in areas of Afghanistan is supported by many of the local villages who have long been threatened and intimidated by the thugish tactics of the enemy forces. The United States leads a multinational force pursuing the enemy in Afghanistan. Noticeable progress has been made with the government in allowing free elections and the building of schools, hospitals and roads as provinces continue to improve their infrastructure.



## Regional Command East / Task Force Devil

# Open wide!

*Deployed dental teams keep Salerno hygienic*



Spc. Billy G. Wilson, a dental technician with Logistics Task Force 307th, takes an X-ray of Staff Sgt. William Becerrial, a squad leader with Company C, Task Force White Devil, Oct. 25 at the Forward Operating Base Salerno dental clinic.

**Story and photos by**  
**Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke**  
*TF Devil Public Affairs*

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SALERNO**  
- As patients enter the dental clinic here the first thing they see is an "Army of One" recruiting poster telling potential dental recruits that "When Soldiers can't go to the dentist, you go to them."

Capt. Randall S. Roark, a Mentor, Ohio, native and dentist with Logistics Task Force 307th, and Spc. Billy G. Wilson, a Las Vegas native and dental technician also with LTF 307th are living up to that poster everyday as they operate a full service dental clinic inside an olive drab tent at Forward Operating Base Salerno.

"Everything possible at (Fort) Bragg is possible here," said Roark. "We have even arranged through Germany to have lab work done."

Roark and Wilson make up one of the Army's most remotely deployed dental teams as they service the more than 2,000 service members and civilians that operate daily out of the base that sits near the Pakistan border.

"We tell people that we deploy with them, but they really don't believe us," Wilson said. He recalled how shocked his coworkers at Fort Bragg were when they saw him in desert uniforms getting ready to deploy.

When they were told they would be deploying to Regional Command East in Afghanistan Wilson said he knew they would have to pack light and remain flexible in order to accomplish their mission.

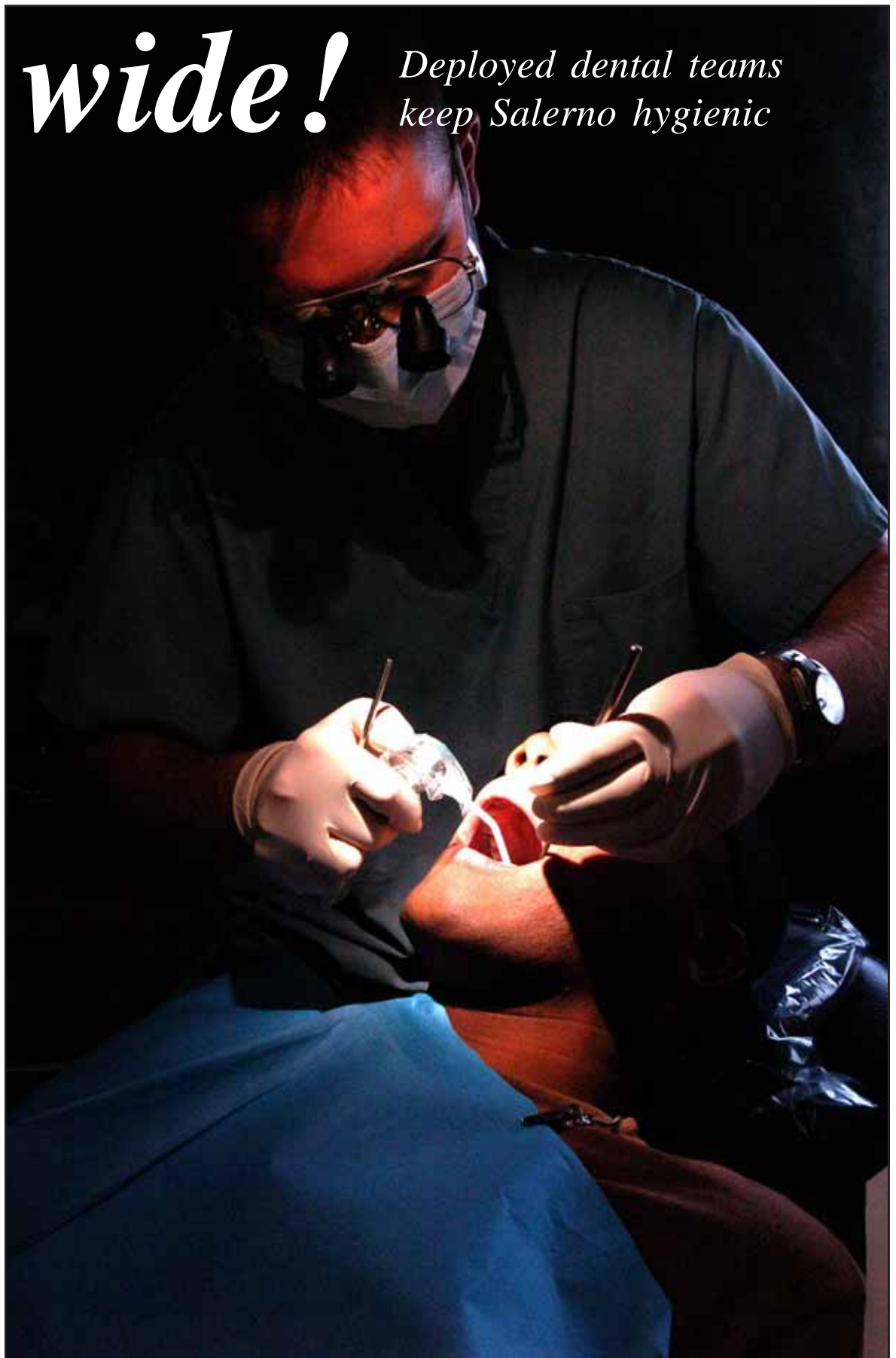
"During (the certification exercise) we realized that we would have to be able to pack up and move quickly," Wilson said. "We have to be versatile."

The team demonstrated their versatility on one of their trips to other forward operating bases in RC East. Occasionally Roark and Wilson will travel throughout the area of operations providing dental care to service members throughout an area about the size of North Carolina.

"We have been to places where all we had for the patient to sit in was a metal office chair or a stool," Wilson said.

Despite their flexibility the team still has a challenge in keeping some of the older pieces of equipment running and keeping enough supplies in stock.

However, Roark said they do whatever it



Capt. Randall S. Roark, a dentist with Logistics Task Force 307th, checks the teeth of Staff Sgt. William Becerrial, a squad leader with Company C, Task Force White Devil, Oct. 25 at the Forward Operating Base Salerno dental clinic. Roark heads one of the Army's most forward deployed dental teams.

takes to accomplish their mission while deployed and both are glad to be deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom.

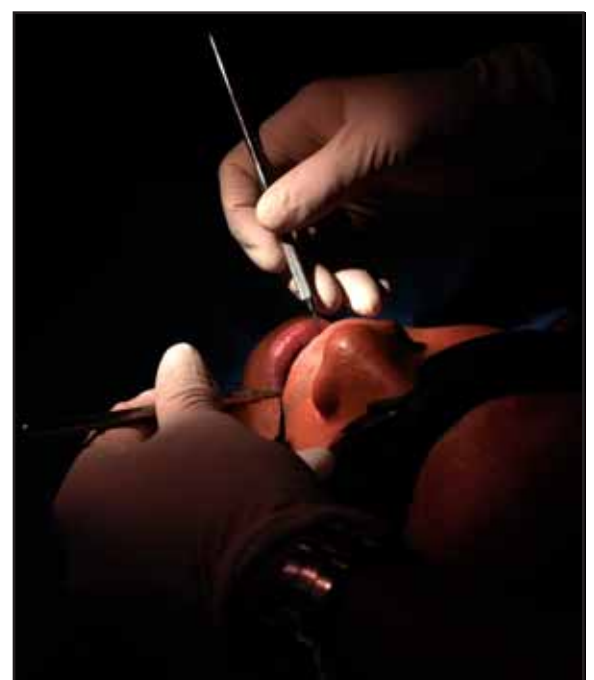
Nothing else compares to the experience gained through doing the job deployed, Wilson said.

When comparing the experience to dentistry in the civilian world, Roark said there would be no way for him to have gained so much experience since he is running the clinic on his own.

Many of the Soldiers who are treated at the clinic are surprised at the level of care they are able to receive this far from home.

"I hate going to the dentist," said Spc. Eli H. Hathaway, Headquarters Company, Combined Task Force Devil. "But they pulled my (wisdom) tooth, and I've had no complications, so I'm happy."

With a full range of services available and waiting lists months long for procedures at Fort Bragg, it isn't hard to see why more and more troops are taking advantage of the Devil Dentists at FOB Salerno.



Capt. Randall S. Roark, a dentist with Logistics Task Force 307th, checks the teeth of Staff Sgt. William Becerrial, a squad leader with Company C, Task Force White Devil, Oct. 25 at Operating Base Salerno dental clinic. Roark heads one of the Army's most forward deployed dental teams.



## Regional Command East / Task Force Devil

# Medical mission visits orphanage

Story and photo by  
Sgt. Chuck D. Meseke  
TF Devil Public Affairs

GARDEZ - Soldiers from the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team conducted a Medical assistance mission Nov. 8 at an orphanage in the city of Gardez.

The mission treated 53 patients, 46 of them children, for various medical conditions. After receiving treatment for their ailments, the patients were given vitamins, tooth brushes, tooth paste, winter clothing, toys and school supplies.

Although the PRT conducts frequent medical missions in the area, the orphanage offers Coalition forces a unique opportunity to reach out to the enemy's recruiting base, according to Capt. David P. Harper, a Blackfoot, Idaho, native and task force surgeon for 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 504<sup>th</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment.

"The Taliban exploits underprivileged young men in Pakistan, and here," Harper said. "We treated a lot of boys in their early teens."

In the next few years those boys may be faced with the decision to join anti-Coalition forces.

"Our biggest impact is building good will with the children," Harper said.

Despite the tactful gains of



Spc. Ashley N. Stermole, a medic with the Gardez Provincial Reconstruction Team, diagnoses children Nov. 8 during a Medical Civil Assistance Program mission at the Gardez Orphanage.

goodwill between Coalition forces and the future young men of Afghanistan, the medical missions remains a human event of doctors and medics taking care of patients.

Harper showed this as he took down information from a 17-year-old boy who had learned all too young about the consequences of violence as stray bullets had left him without a family and without the lower portion of his right leg.

"I am going to contact as many Army doctors as I can to see if there is a way to help him with an orthopedic (leg)," Harper said.

Meanwhile, Spc. Ashley N. Stermole, a Houston native and

medic with the PRT, was treating an infected sore on the back of a young boy.

Although no stranger to gore in medicine, when not on active duty Stermole is an emergency medical technician, she cringed a little as her patient cried out in pain as she cut into the infection.

"I have no problem doing it to my (Soldiers) I treat, but it is so hard on the cute kids," Stermole said.

The treatment of the infection was the most complicated procedure of the day for Stermole, but the most important was the vitamins and dental care items given to each child, she said.

"Everyone gets those items if we have the resources," said Stermole, hoping preventative medicine will make her job easier in future medical missions.

As the mission wound down, a couple of Soldiers were playing a dusty game of pick-up soccer with dozens of orphans behind the building; the children's laughter evidence of another successful mission for the Soldiers of the PRT.

The Gardez PRT will continue to conduct civil military operations in order to build relations and to help in the effectiveness of the Government of Afghanistan in the region.

## Troops receive life-saving lesson

### CLASS from page 6

helps our combat medics out by providing supplies that they'll need on every soldier. More lives are saved on the battlefield because of the training these soldiers are going through."

This is the second time the "Devil Responder" course has been offered at FOB Salerno. The instructors have a goal of holding one class per quarter during their deployment.

"We hope to put at least 120 soldiers through this training while we're here," said Barakat. "Usually we have about 30 students per class."

The medics offer the same class back at Ft. Bragg, N.C., but on a much

larger scale.

"Back at Bragg, we have an actual obstacle course, about one kilometer long, that we would do the final training on," said Sgt. Chris Boyd, a healthcare specialist in Ambulance Platoon. "But here we have to improvise a course. It's only about 200 meters long, but we try to make it as challenging as possible."

One of the more challenging aspects of the course is trying to give someone an I.V. for the first time. It of 10 takes more than one attempt to get it right, something the receivers of the I.V. are none too happy about.

"That's the most blood I've ever bled!" exclaimed Westberry as Kennedy pulled out the I.V. tube that

finally proved successful. This was his fifth try.

"It's good training and good information to know just in case I ever have to use this," said Kennedy. "It's good knowing that my buddies by my side know how to do this too. I think everyone should go through this training."

With both Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom going on, more and more military service members are experiencing injuries both out in the field from improvised explosive devices and ambushes and inside the wire from rocket attacks. Training classes like the "Devil Responder" course help those injured live to fight another day.

## Two key cities now connected thanks to Wildcats



A dozer operator works the roadbed in the mountainous section of the project. (Photo courtesy of TF Sword)

### WILDCATS from page 5

they'll regroup and head off to the next project.

When asked what the biggest challenge has been, Maj. Keith Vollert, task force operations officer, said it was extreme differences in the terrain between the sections and the unique chal-

lenges each offered. These talented reservists from South Carolina (and around the country) have been an asset to CJTF-76 and are greatly improving the lives of average Afghans in Paktika Province.

The "Build and Destroy" Wildcats are ready for the next mission.



## Regional Command South / *Task Force Bayonet*

# Tools for success

Afghan farmers receive instruments of the trade from Coalition



(Left) An elder listens at the weekly Panjwayi village shura. (Right) Capt. Jeremy Turner, Co. D, 2nd Battalion, 504 Infantry, reviews convoy plans with his Afghan National Army counterparts.

**Story and photos by Sgt. First Class Stephen Lum**  
*TF Bayonet Public Affairs*

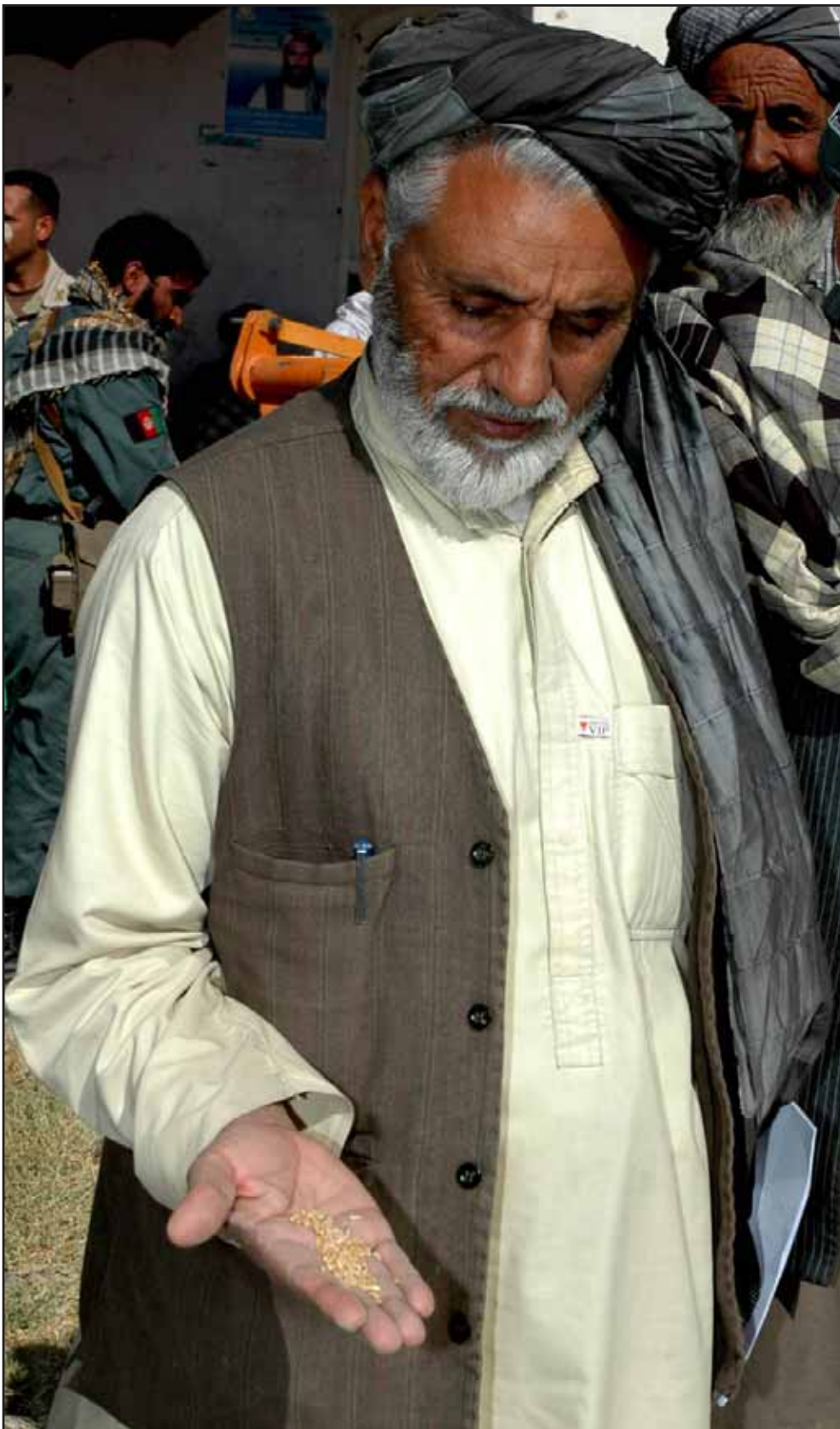
KANDAHAR PROVINCE—Tucked away west of Kandahar City is Panjwayi; where on Oct. 27, the villagers welcomed the opening of a secured water tower wall and the delivery of 15,000 kilograms of wheat seed, two tractors, two trailers and farming tools.

Coalition forces from the American, Canadian and Romanian armies spent the summer here, building trust and friendships with weekly shuras, village medical outreach programs and information sharing.

This week's shura began with a thank you and congratulations to all the players involved in the successful election process, including the village elders, the district leader, the new police chief and the newly elected district representative.

U.S. Lt. Col. Bert A. Ges, the Task Force Gun Devil commander and Canadian Col. Stephen J. Bowers, the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team commander, shared their insights to the process of getting more roads, culverts and irrigation wells built, as well as the process of releasing certain incarcerated individuals.

They took a break from the shura for a photo opportunity as the grain and farming



A Panjwayi district leader inspects the newly delivered wheat grain seed to be planted this coming spring.

equipment were presented to the council. One hundred fifty bags of wheat seed were off-loaded from two jingle trucks in the village meeting hall yard. The farming supplies and wheat seed, funded by the United States Agency for International Development, were provided as an alternative crop to the poppy crop raised by so many local farmers.

While the shura was going on, a civic assistance operation was being conducted by Coalition medical personnel and the latest issue of the 'Peace' newspaper and other informational literature were passed out by civil affairs and psychological operations personnel.

The shura continued with village leaders and elders able to share their wants and concerns, while many others offered their thanks to the Coalition.

After the conclusions of the shura, key town leaders joined Ges and his staff at the water tower wall and guard shack for a ribbon cutting ceremony. The water tower built this summer was unsecured from vandals and the wall completed over the last 30 days will provide that added security. The material and local contractor's labor cost of \$33,000 were funded by the Commander's Emergency Response Program. Words of thanks were again exchanged as all departed the ceremony.



## Regional Command South / Task Force Bayonet

# Light unit tackles heavy load

### Combat Support Company connects bases with gravel road



Afghan and U.S. military vehicles travel along an unfinished portion of the Qalat to Shinkay road in the Zabul Province Oct. 31. (Left) A Soldier from the 173d Airborne Infantry Combat Support Company works on a section of the road Oct. 31. The 65-kilometer road project connects three U.S. military forward operating bases and is expected to be completed by Dec. 15 before the winter weather hits.

**Story and photos by**  
**Sgt. Tara Teel**  
*CJTF-76 Public Affairs*

BAGRAM – Beneath a huge cloud of dust lies evidence of the hard work and dedication of a light infantry unit tackling an unimaginable mission.

That mission involved planning, coordinating and constructing a road connecting Qalat to Shinkay in Southeastern Afghanistan, cutting the driving time from over eight hours down to a respectable three and a half hours. Guided by past evidence of old tire tracks through the barren countryside, the 173d Airborne Infantry Combat Support Company ambitiously looked at the challenge as a dream job.

“We are a simple light unit that mainly performs jobs such as airfield repairs, like fixing craters and potholes. We don’t build roads,” said Capt. Dan Young, CSC commander. “So when this project was mentioned, we went out on a limb and said we’d do it. It was a dream project, something that was not expected.”

The 65-kilometer road project connects three U.S. military forward operating bases. However, the two platoons of CSC Soldiers are not tackling this mission alone. Engineers from C Company 864<sup>th</sup> Engineer Company, Afghan National Army soldiers and local Afghan contractors are pitching in to complete the road before nature shuts them down for the winter months.

“This project is the largest joint Afghan, contractor and U.S. project happening in the country right now,” said Master Sgt. Donald Finley, op-

erations sergeant and quality assurance and quality control inspector.

More than 40 Afghans are employed everyday to build the more than 250 culverts placed along the route to ensure the road is not washed away by rain, and the road doesn’t obstruct the irrigation flow from the mountains to their fields.

“When we first got here, the locals were afraid to work for us because they feared the Taliban, but now we have people lined up at the gates to work,” Finley said. “We are taking advantage of the Afghan workers because the work they do frees up the Soldiers for managing the work, so everything will get done in time.”

“I just point and they go and get it done,” said Sgt. Justin Andersen about the locals and ANA soldiers who work in his area of responsibility along the road.

The non-commissioned officers are given larger roles of responsibility managing different aspects of the overall project such as placing the culverts or overseeing workers.

“The CSC Soldiers are so excited about this project because in 20 years they will be able to look at a map of Afghanistan and say ‘I built that road,’” said Obeada.

The Soldiers began the project in July using the five-ton dump trucks and other small equipment they had on hand. They completed eight kilometers of road before the contractors, a civilian company named Hercules, started to supply them in September with the big equipment like the 20-ton dump trucks.

Every Friday, the Soldiers provide training and testing for the ANA soldiers, so they can operate the

heavy equipment and drive the dump trucks. More than 42 ANA engineers have been certified since July and now drive all the trucks.

“This frees our Soldiers up for other positions, and the ANA love to drive. They take turns and are disappointed if you tell them that they are not driving that day,” Finley said.

“The ANA soldiers are getting this training so that they will be building roads long after we’re gone,” said 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt. Lauro Obeada, CSC first sergeant. “They will be opening their own road construction companies soon and charging the government!”

As of Nov. 1, more than 30 kilometers of the road is complete and is slated to be entirely complete by Dec. 15. The road is important for travel between the military bases and acts as a deterrent for improvised explosive devices. IEDs can more easily be placed in the old dirt roads, but the hard packed surface

and gravel makes it difficult for enemy to hide them, and it increases the visibility of the devices.

Since the beginning of the project, the discoveries of IED have decreased. Where previously when Soldiers were finding them daily, there have only been 18 in the last four months. The 391<sup>st</sup> Engineer Battalion, a reserve unit from North Carolina, who is serving back-to-back tours, provides route clearing along the road daily with their mine-clearing equipment. Since the road project began, only two U.S. military vehicles were damaged by IEDs.

Upon completion of the road, the Soldiers will continue to maintain and improve it.

“Just as an infantryman continues to improve his foxhole, we will continue to improve this road as long as weather permits us to,” Young said.

## On patrol down south



Paratroopers from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 173rd Brigade (Airborne) patrol the streets of Kandahar, Afghanistan. (Photo by Spc. Jon H. Arguello, TF Bayonet Public Affairs)



## Regional Command South / Task Force Bayonet

# ANA, U.S. prep base for winter weather



An Afghan National Army soldier at Camp Wolverine works on constructing a tent platform as part of the winterization process. U.S. and Afghan soldiers worked side by side for months to ensure the camp would be ready for the winter weather. (Photo by Sgt. Tara Teel, CJTF-76 Public Affairs)

**Story by**  
**Master Sgt. Donald Finley**  
*173d Airborne Brigade Combat Support Company*

**CAMP WOLVERINE** – Caked in dust, sweat beads on the foreheads of the American and Afghan soldiers even though the harsh sun dried up all other traces of moisture.

This was the case through the long Afghan summer months and the term ‘winterization’ was reserved for those stuck in cubicles and small offices rather than for those actually fighting the weather and elements.

As October ran into November, 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Support Company Soldiers assigned to Camp Wolverine in the Zabul Province and 4-2 Kandak Afghan National Army soldiers quickly realized that those soldiers who conducted the planning, requisition and issue of winterization materials, services and supplies served in an important role.

Throughout October as winterization improvements were made to different areas of the camp, U.S. and Afghan soldiers joined together

in the effort to make the camp winter friendly. The improvements began with power generators, which provides the additional electrical amps that heaters need. Both the Afghan and U.S. soldiers received additional generator assets from their respective logistics channels.

Once the generators and heaters were in place, the next task was to add elevated wooded tent floors, tent liners and sandbags at the bases of the tents so they could be lived in.

“During this second phase, U.S. and Afghan soldiers worked side-by-side regularly in completing these tasks, as well as continuing their normal offensive operations against the enemy in the area,” said Capt. Craig Brady, Camp Wolverine Engineer Company team chief in charge of training the Afghan soldiers.

Afghan soldiers play an essential role daily in the winterization progress. Their knowledge and familiarity with the land and climate has proved time and time again that they are invaluable. For example, knowing the wind direction near the base, the Afghan soldiers were able to

minimizing heat lost from the tents by placing the doors in the most winter-efficient location on the tent.

The timely addition of the elevated floors and other wooden additions such as door frames came from the U.S. Soldiers who had some carpentry skills from helping dad or someone else. However, the Afghan soldiers were more than eager to learn and put their counterparts out of a job.

“The ANA soldiers want to learn anything and jump in to help and do anything,” Brady said. “They are so proud to be soldiers and wear the uniform anywhere. The fact that they are learning to do this stuff will stay with them forever and they can teach they younger guys.”

With the basic areas of housing, food and hygiene winterized, the Coalition team working together is focused on other areas to minimize the harsh effects of the quickly changing weather as winter snow is around the corner. The guard towers which are jointly manned everyday received plexi-glass windows, doors and heaters. Warm-up shacks were added for the guards

at points such as the entry control points for base.

Other additions included the construction of plywood houses, heat traces or other field expedient insulation for the critical infrastructure assets such as wells, water lines and water heaters. The regular insulation was also secured in place with zip ties or ceran wrap.

In addition to winterizing the buildings, gravel taken from a nearby riverbed was laid throughout the entire base to ensure the constant flow of traffic inside the base. More fuel bags and fuel was provided by Task Force Bayonet just in case resupply becomes an issue because of poor weather conditions. Extra rations and other supplies also were delivered to guarantee that the Soldiers and equipment remain capable of completing the mission in Southeastern Afghanistan regardless of the weather and temperature outside.

The winterization provides the Afghan forces with not only the tools, but also the infrastructure to continue their operations against the enemy forces even throughout the winter months.



## Regional Command South / Task Force Bayonet



Sgt. Amber Bormann (center), Headquarters and Headquarters Company 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, stands vigil with Canadian and British Soldiers during a Veteran's Day ceremony Nov. 11 at Kandahar Airfield.

# Fallen honored in KAF ceremony

**Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jacob Caldwell**  
*TF Bayonet Public Affairs*

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade and Coalition Soldiers gathered to remember the men and women that have been killed while serving during Operation Enduring Freedom at a Veteran's Day ceremony Nov. 11 at Kandahar Airfield.

Soldiers from the American, Canadian, British and Dutch armies participated in the coalition ceremony.

Capt. Mark Jacobson, 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Adjutant, was proud to place a wreath during the ceremony.

"I am proud to be able to stand with other Soldiers from other nations as we all remember. Even more significantly, throughout the ceremony, I could see Engineer equipment working to rebuild the runway in preparation for turning the facility back to the local Afghan population. Helicopters were flying in and out carrying on the mission of winning the war even as we remember the cost of war."

Capt. Adam Cubbage, Headquarters and Headquarters Company 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade commander

agrees that the day is important.

"As a Soldier, Veterans Day now has more of a significant meaning. It means reflecting on the sacrifices made by those who have gone before me," said Cubbage, "It means that the country still remembers and honors her fallen heroes, and that while most do not fully grasp the significance of the day, some still do."

Veteran's Day is a meaningful holiday for Jacobson and Cubbage largely because of their families' military tradition.

"When I think about Veteran's Day a few things come to mind. I remember what I am fighting for and why I am in the Army. I know the decisions I make daily are guaranteeing the future freedom for people who don't even know freedom," said Jacobson, "I think about my Dad and Grandfather who were both veterans (Vietnam and WWII, respectively).

Cubbage's family has a proud tradition within the brigade itself.

"My father was in the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade in Viet Nam," said Cubbage, "After this experience, when I call him and wish him a happy Veteran's Day, there is a deeper appreciation and understanding."

The loss of friends during de-

ployments to both Iraq and Afghanistan has affected Jacobson's take on Veteran's Day.

"I have known several guys very well who have died in Operation Iraqi Freedom (1st Lt. Dave Bernstein, USMA '01) and Operation Enduring Freedom (1st Lt. Derek Hines, USMA '02). Their loss is particularly painful because I still see them in my mind as they were and I wish that I could talk to them again," said Jacobson.

Cubbage has also felt the sting of losing a comrade.

"I have lost several friends over the past few years: college friends, people I was commissioned with and friends I have made in this unit. After all this, when I hear their names read, I take inventory of what legacy they left behind," said Cubbage. "I attribute Veteran's Day as a day to honor their memory, and to be counted for what they stood for and what they believed in."



Capt. Adam Cubbage, Headquarters and Headquarters Company 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, renders honors during a coalition Veteran's Day ceremony Nov. 11 at Kandahar Airfield.



# What's Happening / News You Can Use

## Holiday mailing deadlines

**Space available mail** -- Nov. 26  
**Parcel airlift mail** -- Dec. 3  
**Priority Mail** -- Dec. 5  
**First class (letter/mail)** -- Dec. 5

## Free Microsoft tests available for servicemembers

Computer-oriented servicemembers may qualify to take a Microsoft Certified Professional exam—generally a \$125 expense—at no cost, under a recently announced two-year program administered by Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES).

Servicemembers in information technology-related jobs and servicemembers who have gained IT-related experience through training or education are eligible to apply for a voucher.

This program “is an innovative way to assist in meeting some service members’ needs for today and provide some foundation for them to build on for tomorrow,” Sandra Winborne, manager of the DANTES Certification Program, said in a statement.

### Accelerated GI Bill Payments

If you are considering a high-tech career, you may be eligible to receive lump sum payment of 60 percent of tuition and fees. Find military-friendly schools today.

The program is scheduled to run for two years, but there are a limited number of vouchers. Officials anticipate that they will all be used well before the two-year period comes to pass so people are encouraged to apply promptly.

The voucher is good for a broad range of exams such as Administering Microsoft SQL Server 7.0 and Installing, Configuring and Administering Microsoft XP Professional.

Tests are given at Pearson VUE centers. Pearson has more than more than 250 centers in 50 countries, along with testing centers at military installations.

The information site includes a long FAQ list that answers questions about the program. If you want to contact DANTES about the test voucher program, please email DANTES at [certprog@voled.doded.mil](mailto:certprog@voled.doded.mil)

The Veterans Administration also offers information about a variety of certification programs and Military.com offers a trade school finder that can help people interested in pursuing Microsoft certifications.

## SGLI VGLI update

On September 30, 2005, the “Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance Enhancement Act of 2005” became Law.

The law makes permanent increases in the maximum SGLI amount and VGLI amount from \$250,000 to \$400,000 and increases the increment amount to be divisible by \$50,000. The law is retroactive to Sept. 1, 2005, and applies to deaths occurring on or after said date. In addition the law requires the secretary to notify a married service member’s spouse of: (i) the service members eligibility and failure to be insured; (ii) the service members election for less than the maximum amount of available insurance; (iii) a reduction in the service members amount of insurance coverage; or (iv) the service members designation of a person, other than the spouse or a child of the member, as the policy beneficiary.

The notification must in writing unless prior notification has been provided before the new designation, and the spouse is not a designated policy beneficiary.

## New Army mentorship program offered

The new Army Mentorship Community and Army Mentorship Resource Center websites are now operational and available to those with Army Knowledge Online access.

As part of the new mentorship philosophy, “Leaving a Legacy Through Mentorship,” the sites are designed to help bring mentors and mentees together. All Active Component Soldiers, Reserve Component Soldiers, Department of Army Civilians, Spouses, Retirees, Veterans, and Contractors, who are authorized AKO access, are encouraged to participate in the program.

Within the Army Mentorship Community, there are multiple tailored mentorship forums. Each forum offers the opportunity for open dialogue between voluntary mentors and those seeking advice, guidance and mentorship.

In these forums, open discussions are highly encouraged in order to help others develop and grow personally and professionally.

The Army Mentorship Resource Center offers valuable information for both mentors and mentees including related articles, a mentorship handbook, a sample Individual Development Action Plan and a searchable mentorship profile server for mentors.

Visit <http://mentorship.army.mil> or log on to the AKO Army Mentorship Community.

## New stamps honor Marine war heroes

In honor of the 230th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps, the U.S. Postal Service is scheduled to release the U.S. Marine Corps Heritage Collection of four distinguished Corps postage stamps.

The Distinguished Marine Stamps honor four of the most reputable Marine Corps war heroes including Gunnery Sgt. John Basilone, Sgt. Maj. Daniel J. Daly, Lt. Gen. John A. Lejuene and Lt. Gen. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller.

Purchase of the stamps became available exclusively on Marine Corps installations Nov. 10 at \$7.40 for a book of 20 stamps. Other post offices began sale of the stamps on Nov. 11.

The Marine Corps specially produced two postmarks of the 1st Marine Division Fleet Marine Force unit insignia and the Camp Pendleton base insignia for the stamps. The postmarks are specific to Camp Pendleton and will only be available there and Washington D.C. Also available for purchase is a U.S. Marine Corps silver dollar with a memorial of the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima on one side and the Corp’s emblem on the other side. Proceeds from this coin will help build the Marine Corps National Museum in Quantico, Va.

## Combating possible flu pandemic

The Defense Department’s deployment health officials have posted a webpage as part of President Bush’s strategy to combat the possibility of a flu pandemic. The page includes frequently asked questions, information geared to servicemembers and links to other resources. The president last week called for \$7.1 billion in emergency funding and \$1.2 billion to buy 20 million doses of a vaccine against the current avian flu. For more information, visit the new Defense Department’s webpage at [www.pandemicflu.gov](http://www.pandemicflu.gov).

## Submit your unit’s story to The Patriot

Tell the whole CJOA what your unit is doing. The Patriot is always on the lookout for amateur journalists and photographers who have a story to tell.

Send your stories to [schultea@cjtf76.centcom.mil](mailto:schultea@cjtf76.centcom.mil).

Stand alone photos are also welcome. Remember when submitting stories and photos to remember the 5 W’s of journalism: who, what, where, when and why. Also include full names, rank and units of troops involved and of the author. Stories will be edited for content and to meet journalistic standards.

### Free Stuff!

The Patriot will feature a web site per issue which offers free stuff for service members.

Free mail and gifts sent to children of deployed troops

<http://www.prweb.com>